

What is claimed is:

1. A system for obtaining enriched activity data in a client-server communications network wherein information requested by a network element is cached at one or more other network elements, comprising:

a server network element including server software and a database for generating and storing a plurality of information files that are accessible to a requesting network element, the information files including text files and key words that are interpreted by the requesting network element to display the information requested, the information file further including an uncacheable single pixel Graphics Image Format (GIF) request;

wherein upon interpreting the information file, the single pixel GIF request is transmitted from the requesting element over the communications network to the server network element which reads and stores enriched data contained therein.

2. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 1 further comprising one or more cache engines that are connected to at least one of the other network elements for temporarily storing requested information files that are served upon demand to the requesting network element.

3. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 1 wherein the single pixel GIF request includes a Common Gateway Interface (CGI) query string appended to it that contains the enriched data.
4. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 3 wherein the CGI query string includes an identification of the location of the requested information file.
5. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 3 wherein the CGI query string includes a number of image objects contained in the information file.
6. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 3 wherein the CGI query string includes an identification of a network element that referred the requesting network element to the server network element.
7. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 3 wherein the CGI query string includes a persistent cookie identification of the requesting network element.
8. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 1 wherein the client-server communications network is a global network such as the Internet.

9. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 1 wherein the plurality of information files are hypertext documents written with HyperText Markup Language (HTML) tags.
10. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 9 wherein the hypertext documents contain source HTML code interpreted by the requesting element to generate the display of corresponding web pages stored at the server network element.
11. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 1 wherein the server network element is a HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) server.
12. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 1 wherein the requesting network element is a client browser application.
13. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 9 wherein the single pixel GIF request with an appended Common Gateway Interface (CGI) query string is included as part of a JavaScript command that is put directly into the HTML file.
14. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 13 wherein the JavaScript command is a "document.write" command which places an expression that follows the command into a document window.

15. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 14 wherein the expression contains a HyperText Markup Language (HTML) image (IMG) tag with a source (SRC) attribute that specifies the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) location for the hypertext document.
16. The system for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 1 wherein the other network elements include any one or more of switch devices, router devices, gateways, and client computer devices.
17. A method for obtaining enriched activity data in a client-server communications network wherein information requested by a network element is cached at one or more other network elements, comprising the acts of:
- generating and storing a plurality of information files at a server network element that are accessible to a requesting network element, the information files including text files and key words and a single pixel Graphics Image Format (GIF) request;
 - interpreting the information files including the text files, key words and single pixel GIF request by the requesting network element to display the information requested;
 - transmitting the single pixel GIF request from the requesting element over the communications network to the server network element; and
 - reading and storing the enriched activity data contained in the transmitted single pixel GIF request at the server network element.

18. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 17 further comprising the act of temporarily storing the requested information files that are served on demand to the requested network element by one or more cache engines that are connected to at least one of the other network elements.
19. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 17 further comprising the act of appending a common gateway interface (CGI) query string to the single pixel GIF request.
20. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 19 wherein the CGI query string includes an identification of the location of the requested information file.
21. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 19 wherein the CGI query string includes a number of image objects contained in the information file.
22. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 19 wherein the CGI query string includes an identification of a network element that referred the requesting network element to the server network element.
23. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 19 wherein the CGI query string includes a persistent cookie identification of the requesting network element.

24. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 17 wherein the client-server communications network is a global network such as the Internet.
25. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 17 wherein the plurality of information files are hypertext documents written with HyperText Markup Language (HTML) tags.
26. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 25 further comprising interpreting the source HTML code in the hypertext documents by the requesting element to generate a display of corresponding web pages stored at the server network element.
27. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 17 wherein the hypertext documents are stored at a HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) server.
28. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 17 wherein the requesting network element is a client browser application.
29. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 25 further including the single pixel GIF request with an appended Common Gateway Interface (CGI) query string is included as part of a JavaScript command that is put directly into the HTML file.

30. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 29 wherein the JavaScript command is a "document.write" command which places an expression that follows the command into a document window.

31. The method for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 30 wherein the expression contains a HyperText Markup Language (HTML) image (IMG) tag with a source (SRC) attribute that specifies the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) location of the hypertext document.

32. A computer readable medium containing a computer program for obtaining enriched activity data in a client-server communications network wherein information requested by a network element is cached at one or more other network elements, the computer program product comprising:

program instructions that generate and store a plurality of accessible information files at a server network element, the information files including text files and key words and a single pixel Graphics Image Format (GIF);

program instructions that receive the single pixel GIF request from the requesting element when the requesting element interprets the contents of the information file; and

program instructions that read and store the enriched activity data contained in the transmitted single pixel GIF request at the server network element.

33. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 32 further comprising program instructions that append a common gateway interface (CGI) query string to the single pixel GIF request.
34. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 33 wherein the GCI query string includes an identification of the location of the requested information file.
35. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 33 wherein the CGI query string includes a number of image objects contained in the information file.
36. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 33 wherein the CGI query string includes an identification of a network element that referred the requesting network element to the server network element.
37. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 33 wherein the CGI query string includes a persistent cookie identification of the requesting network element.
38. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 32 wherein the plurality of information files are hypertext documents written with HyperText Markup Language (HTML) tags.

39. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 32 further comprising program instructions that store the hypertext documents at a HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP) server.
40. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 38 further comprising program instructions that place a JavaScript command, including the single pixel GIF request with an appended Common Gateway Interface (CGI) query string, directly into the HTML file.
41. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 40 wherein the JavaScript command is a "document.write" command which places an expression that follows the command into a document window at a requesting network element.
42. The computer program product for obtaining enriched activity data of claim 41 wherein the expression contains a HyperText Markup Language (HTML) image (IMG) tag with a source (SRC) attribute that specifies the Uniform Resource Locator (URL) location of the hypertext document.